Maxine Carr –

Britain's tabloid trash at their hypocritical worst

Maxine Carr is back in the news for all the wrong reasons, but there are no right reasons for this poor, wretched woman whose real crime was to be duped by a plausible, manipulative liar.

At least three tabloids are leading with a new non-story about Maxine Carr using the phrase "Soham liar".

Maxine Carr

I remember the Summer of 2002 very well, and not just for the Soham Murders; it was the time I was one match away from becoming English Open Backgammon Champion; the next day I lost both my remaining matches in the tournament, and for the first and only time in 13 starts I walked away from the Mindsports Olympiad without so much as a bronze medal.

Away from the campus of Loughborough University, other people had a genuine tragedy on their minds. Two ten year old girls – Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman – had donned Manchester United football shirts, and then walked off into oblivion, never to be seen alive again.

At first, this was a missing persons investigation, David Beckham was brought in to appeal to them to return home. There were also the usual false leads. Someone claimed to have seen a car being driven very fast with two kids in the back who might have been signalling in distress. Then there was what was thought to have been a grave, but turned out to be a badger sett.

Then Ian Huntley was arrested. Ian Kevin Huntley was born at Grimsby on January 31, 1974. Grimsby is famous for three things – fish, a "tribute" song recorded by Elton John, and it is the place where Allan Smethurst – the Singing Postman – died in December 2000. If Huntley is not Grimsby's most notable product, he is arguably its most notorious.

Huntley was the caretaker at the local school, and classroom assistant Carr was his lover. They were if not an odd couple then oddish. Petite Carr with her flaming red hair is or was a strikingly recognisable woman, not for her good looks, just striking.

Huntley looked totally innocuous, but he lured the two girls into his tied house, and murdered them. At his trial he came out with a bizarre story which Vincent Tabak may well have heard, because circumstances aside, the one he told at his recent trial was strikingly similar. Somehow the girls ended up in Huntley's bathroom where one of them fell in the bath and drowned, and he in a trance-like state, smothered the other one. As the saying goes, you couldn't make it up, but he did, and the jury were not impressed. Ian Huntley was convicted of murdering both girls, whose bodies he had disposed of in as cruel a manner as their murders. He was given the mandatory life sentence, and has been a regular target for other prisoners out to make names for themselves. Among other things, he had his throat slashed last year.

It is understandable that Huntley should become a hate figure, but less understandable why Carr should, although the one-time couple have obviously struck a chord with many of the less sophisticated members of the British public as a latter day Brady and Hindley. The analogy is flawed. Brady and Hindley were psychos and a killer couple. Huntley is not a psychopath; he is simply an evil man with a compulsion to deflower young girls and the willingness to kill them, at least in this case. He is not even in the same class as Robert Black, a predator; in the Soham case at least, Huntley was an opportunist.

Maxine Carr

One of many edits of the iconic photograph issued by the British police during the hunt for the two ten year olds, blonde Holly Wells (with the ear rings) and Jessica Chapman, victims of the Soham Murders.

At their trial, the CPS decided in their wisdom to put Carr in the dock along with Huntley as though they were equal partners in this heinous enterprise. In fact, all Carr did, stupidly, was give him an alibi. The reason she did this is understandable. Huntley told her that one of the girls had had a nose bleed, and he had taken them into the house to clean her up. This was a sacking offence, period. It was acknowledged that he was the last person to see them alive, and the baby-faced Huntley is the last person Carr or any unknowing person would have suspected of killing not one but two young girls and then disposing of their bodies.

If she had not given Huntley an alibi, their relationship would have been over, and quite likely he would have been sacked, and she too would have been out of a home. That was obviously the way she saw it. Of course, in an investigation of this nature, the police leave absolutely no stone unturned, and her false alibi was easily broken.

The Soham case – the missing person investigation, the discovery of the girls' bodies, the arrests of Huntley and Carr, and especially the memorial service – generated an unbelievable outpouring of grief; in one sense it was like a morbid Beatlemania, dominating the news for weeks.

Carr received a three and a half year sentence for perverting the course of justice; later, just to make her look even worse, the authorities also brought a number of fraud and deception charges against her, including one of, in effect, lying on her CV. She was discharged from prison to anonymity, because although having served a fair sentence, the aforementioned unsophisticated members of the British public think she deserves to be punished forevermore, or perhaps worse. A number of women have in fact been attacked because they were mistaken for Carr. Similar things have happened to women who have been mistaken for Casey Anthony.

Now she is back in the news again the tabloids are whining because this poor, wretched woman, having found love, a man who can see past the hysteria and their demonisation of her, has recently given birth to a baby boy and is shielded behind a permanent injunction, as she should be.

Maxine Carr did what many or even most women would have done in a similar position; she has paid a heavy price for it, and she will for the rest of her life. The tabloids should leave her in what little peace she can find. Just in case, you hadn't noticed, there are real monsters out there, but unlike the unfortunate Maxine Carr, most of them look like us.

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